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SUBJECT: GOJ TAKES OVER MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD CHARITIES,
RELEASES ONE ISLAMIST; BROTHERHOOD MAKES CONCILIATORY
STATEMENT

REF: A. AMMAN 4245

[B](#). AMMAN 5219

[C](#). AMMAN 4651

[D](#). AMMAN 4396

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#). (U) SUMMARY: The government suspended the board of directors of the Muslim Brotherhood's charity organization. Prosecutors released one of the four Islamic Action Front (IAF) members of parliament detained in early June (ref A). The three MPs who remain in custody were referred to the State Security Court (SSC) for trial. In apparent response to the pressure, leaders of the movement met with PM Bakhit and issued a conciliatory statement. END SUMMARY.

GOJ APPOINTEE TAKES OVER CHARITIES, PROSECUTORS TO TAKE
ACTION AGAINST CHARITY OFFICERS

[2](#). (U) The GOJ referred to prosecutors July 5 a report drafted by auditors from the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) that cites financial improprieties at the Islamic Center Charity Society, the social welfare arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. A prosecutor suspended the Society's board of directors July 9, and the Central Bank Governor instructed banks not to accept checks signed by any of the ISSC's board members. According to press, the MOSD appointed Bassam Omoush to serve as administrator of the Society. The Society runs hospitals, clinics, private schools, and orphanages throughout Jordan. COMMENT: Bassam Omoush is a former Muslim Brother and senior staffer at the Society who reportedly split with the movement after clashing with Society staff. Musa Keilani, a publisher and EastBanker observer of the Islamist movement, told emboff that Omoush, also an East Banker, was a poor choice to serve as receiver of the Society because Omoush has "a vendetta" against the predominantly West Bank administrative staff of the Society. END COMMENT.

[3](#). (U) Muslim Brotherhood (MB) Supervisor General Salem Fallahat responded to early news of the investigation of corruption at the Society by welcoming it as an effort to keep the movement honest. However, by the time it became clear a few days later that the GOJ would be taking over the charities the tone changed. IAF Secretary General Zaki Bani Irsheid told media July 10 that the IAF's lawyers are studying the prosecutor general's actions to determine whether they are legal. Irsheid commented that the suspension of the Society's board was a "political" decision and an "unsuccessful escalation." The moves against the Society would disrupt services to the poor and to orphans who are supported by the charity, he claimed.

SECURITY COURT ANNOUNCES PLANS TO PROSECUTE THREE MPs;
RELEASES ONE

¶4. (U) On July 11 an SSC prosecutor announced that he will file charges against three of the IAF Members of Parliament arrested in June: Muhammad Abu Fares (Amman, fifth district), Ali Abul Sukkar (Zarqa, second district) and Jaafar Hourani (Zarqa, fourth district). He did not specify what the charges will be, or set a date for trial. At the same time the prosecutor released Ibrahim Mashoukhi (Zarqa, First District) "because his actions did not constitute a crime."

CONCILIATORY STATEMENT

¶5. (SBU) On the same day, in a shift that suggests the movement is feeling the pressure, Fallahat, Bani Irsheid and other MB officers issued a conciliatory public statement after a meeting with PM Bakhit. The Islamist leaders endorsed the Amman Message campaign, and denounced "takfiri thought." In references to the current confrontation with the GOJ, they condemned terrorism -- the November 2005 hotel bombings in particular -- and "rejected" any statements that might have offended relatives of the hotel bombing victims. This last point was a clear reference to the actions of the IAF Four who visited the Zargawi family condolences in early June, but did not refer to the MPs specifically.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The scenario played out precisely to the gameplan laid out to the Ambassador by senior officials last week (ref B). The King is especially pleased by the points in the conciliatory MB statement, which were his conditions to lighten the pressure. However, the palace and GID will continue to work to isolate and weaken the more extreme and mostly Palestinian-Jordanian elements in the movement.

¶7. (C) The government's latest moves escalated by several notches its standoff with the Muslim Brotherhood. Former Muslim Brother Ibrahim Gharaibeh, an East Banker columnist whose brother Rahil is an IAF spokesman, told poloff he believes the government's steps are aimed specifically at pressuring the movement to dump IAF Secretary General Zaki Bani Irsheid, an East Banker whom the government believes is too close to Hamas sympathizers inside the movement.

¶8. (C) If recent polling data are trustworthy, a majority of Jordanians found MP Abu Fares, early June eulogy for Zargawi distasteful, but the campaign against the MB,s charities will probably find less support, especially if services are disrupted. Even secularists among post's contacts are questioning the prudence and the legality of some of the GOJ,s recent moves against the MB. Meanwhile, freed IAF MP Ibrahim Mashouki summed up the view of many here when he told reporters "I really do not understand why they arrested us in the first place, or why they have released me today."

Hale